

M. Adline Shami,

Reg. No. 18113284012005,

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English & Research Centre,

Women's Christian College, Manonmaniam Sundarnar University,

Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

adlinepinky95@gmail.com

Dr. J. Subitha Persis,

Assistant Professor, Department of English & Research Centre,

Women's Christian College, Manonmaniam Sundarnar University,

Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Guilt, Self-Realization and Reconciliation of Mugo in Ngugi WA Thiongo's

A Grain of Wheat

Abstract: The Present study not only shows the negative outcome of colonialism and neo colonialism but also represent the longing for Kenya in renewing its nationalist vision of democratic society. In renewing its nationalist vision, Ngugi shows the prospect of regeneration and transformation possible for Kenya through self-realization and reconciliation in his novel A Grain of Wheat through the act of reconciliation among individuals, families and the peasant communit, Ngugi contemplates a renaissance to occur in Kenya. The present study also portrays how Ngugi shows transformation in Kenya through Mugo, who made a confession in the Uhuru Celebration for deceiving Kihika through his act of betrayal.

Keywords : A Grain of Wheat, Colonialism, Confession, Neo- Colonialism, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Reconciliation, Self- realization.

A Grain of Wheat represents the drawback of colonisation that led Mugo, village to involve in betrayal. The novel describes how Mugo and Karanja made an understanding from the revolutionary struggle in Kenya leading them to be unworried to the social responsibilities and commitments in the society. Mugo, turns as a sneaker of the Mau Mau leader Kihika towards the revolutionary struggle. The sexual exploitation of Karanja works as the colonial collaborator leads Mumbi a victim to the sexual betrayal towards her husband, Gikonyo. Gikonyo's refusal to unite in the promise of Mumbi's marital discord results in colonial repression in the colonial Kenya. The atrocities of colonial traitor Karanja has corrupted the illusion of equality in colonial system.

Ngugi paves way for the replacement of Colonialism with Neo- Colonialism by offering his hope and expression from guilt and betrayal. And the hope for the renewal of Kenyan vision is brought out through the concept of guilt and self-realization. The public confession of Mugo in the Uhuru Celebration for deceiving Kihika plays a major sign of his transformation. This occurs as a result of self- realization.

In the past, Mugo lacked human understanding, out of his uncaring attitude. He always tries to master himself by involving in the revolutionary activities. He feels frustrated and vulnerable when Kihika drags him into the Mau Mau struggle. In this frustration says, "If I don't serve Kihika, he'll kill me. If I work for him, the government will catch me. The white man has long arms. And they will hang me" (169).

Mugo betrayed Kihika because of his fear of the merciless act of the white men. In the detention camp, he feels tormented with the sense of alienation and isolation. He also feels guilty for betraying Kihika, a true nationalist leader. This guilt is symbolic of transformation that can occur in reconstructing a better future for Kenya.

At the confession in the Uhuru celebration, he is looked up with great respect and is called a hermit by the people of Thabai, for the sufferings he has undergone in the detention camp and for saving a woman in the camp from the whippings of the white man. When he is asked to deliver a speech on Uhuru day, he understands the power and responsibility given to him. Meanwhile the nationalist leaders are waiting to put Karanja on trial as the deceiver of Kihika but Mugo did not choose to be a traitor anymore. He chose to accept his mistake and confess his deed. "You asked for the man who led Kihika to this tree, here. That man stands before you, now. Kihika came to me by night. He put his life into my hands, and I sold it to the white man. And this thing has eaten into my life all these years"(223).

His acceptance and self – realisation reveals that he is not with the imperialist white and natives. Rather he is looking forward for a better future in Kenya. Ngugi not only makes Mugo a hero, through his act confession. He also throws light on the transformation that is possible in admitting one's own guilt and weaknesses.

Mugo's decision to confess his act of betrayal is also caused by Gikonyo and Mumbi's confession of their guilt. Mugo progresses his guilt and admits his crime at the Uhuru gathering. He himself acknowledges his mistakes and accepts his death for of his crime. His death symbolises the concept of acceptance and regeneration. After listening to Mugo, Kihika's mother tells Mumbi, "It was his face, not the memory of my son that caused my tears"(193).

The people are overwhelmed by his confession that they forgive him. But Mugo has to die and Ngugi suggests no alternative to it. As General R tells Mugo, "Your deeds alone will condemn you . No one will ever escape from his own actions" (206). In discussing the death of Mugo, Cook and Okenimkpe mentions, "Mugo, the arch – enemy in the past struggle, at least opens his heart and repents, and his crime can be ritually cleansed from the earth by his sacrificial death" (76). His death is an act of purification clearly indicating the birth of a transformed society.

Even the final unity of Gikonyo and Mumbi symbolises a new beginning which shows the value of a united struggle both at home and in the nation. Mugo's confession becomes an important agent in Gikonyo's change of mind. It brings in a positive impact on him. He realises that it is in accepting one's own shortcomings and in forgiveness lies the true meaning of a relationship. This self-realisation makes him reconcile with Mumbi and he is able to accept Mumbi's child. Gikonyo even appreciates Mugo's courage in facing his guilt at the risk of losing his own life:

He was a brave man, inside. He stood before much honour, praises were heaped on him. He would have become a Chief. Tell me another person who would have exposed his soul for the eyes to peck at. Remember that few people in that meeting are fit to lift a stone against that man. Not unless I we too in turn, open our hearts naked for the world to look at (202).

Though Ngugi presents his strong indictment against the social, political, economic and cultural effects of colonialism and neo colonialism in the pre and post independent Kenya, he also expresses his keen desire for a social disorder in Kenya which would renew its nationalist vision through the act of guilt, self – realisation and reconciliation of Mugo. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o stresses on peace in Kenya indicating the origin of a renewed society.

Works Cited

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